COMMISSION DOCUMENT 427 - RETYPED BY PLM, 6/26/71

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

Subject: Issuance of Passport to Lee H. Oswald

At the direction of the Acting Secretary, a review of Departmental files concerning Lee H. Oswald was made in the Office of the Legal Adviser on Friday, November 22 and continuing on to the next morning. Among the files examined was the file kept by the Passport Office.

The Passport file contained the original of a passport application executed by Oswald in New Orleans on June 24, 1963. The application showed that the passport had been issued the following day, June 25, 1963. Since it appeared likely that questions would be raised concerning the rapidity with which Oswald had been issued his passport despite the considerable file on him, Mr. Abba Schwartz, Administrator of SCA, telephoned Mr. Robert Johnson, Chief Counsel of the Passport Office at approximately 11:30 PM on November 22 and asked him to come down to the Department and to explain the Department's procedures for issuing passports.

Mr. Johnson arrived in his office at approximately 12:05AM on November 23. Mr. Schwartz, Mr. Erlich and Mr. Lowenfeld met Mr. Johnson at his office. Mr. Chayes was summoned by telephone as soon as Mr. Johnson arrived.

Mr. Johnson explained that the normal procedure when a passport is applied for at a field post is for a telex to be sent to Washington giving just the name and date of birth of the applicant. The name and date of birth are then checked against an IBM card index file. If the name shows up in the card file, the card is run through the IBM coder and appropriate action is taken to determine whether a passport should be issued. If the card index file does not show an entry for the name, a telex is sent back to the field office with instructions to issue the passport.

At approximately 12:25 Mr. Johnson opened the safe in his office containing the combinations to the other safes and storage areas in the passport office. He got the safe combination for the room in which the card index is kept. He explained that this room was protected by a combination lock connected to an alarm system and he therefore went into an empty room across the hall from Room 1811 to call the guards and advise them to disconnect the alarm. At approximately 12:25 Mr. Johnson opened the door to the room containing the card index file and showed the system to Messrs. Chayes, Schwartz, Erlich, and Lowenfeld. Mr. Johnson first picked up some telexes to show how they are received from the domestic passport agencies. Mr. Johnson explained that these telexes are normally kept for three months. Therefore, he said, there would be no record in the Department of the telex concerning Oswald. Mr. Johnson said he assumed that the telex in the New Orleans office would also have been destroyed after ninety days.

Mr. Johnson then demonstrated the card index file. It appeared that there was no card for Oswald. Mr. Johnson explained that the reason for this was that the lookout notice which would have been posted pursuant to Miss Knight's instructions on March 25, 1960 had been withdrawn, and that subsequent to that time no ground existed for denial of a passport to Oswald.

Mr. Johnson explained that a lookout notice on the grounds of possible membership in the communist party would be posted inly on the basis of motification from the FBI, and that there had been no such notification in the Oswald case. Mr. Schwartz also asked Mr. Johnson about the status of the repatriation loan and its effect on the issuance of a passport to Oswald. Mr. Johnson stated that lookout cards on the basis of unpaid loans to the Department were posted only upon notification by the Department's Finance Office, and that no such notice had been received.

Mr. Johnson was then asked by Mr. Schwartz who had had access to the Oswald file on November 22 before it was sent up to Mr. Schwartz' office at Mr. Mace's request. Mr. Johnson said that the FBI had been the first to look at the file shortly after the assassination. Later, Mr. Gulich of Associated Press and also someone from United Press had called him. Mr. Johnson said that he had thereupon called Mr. Manning's office and that Mr. Joe Dean (T - PH), one of the Department's pressofficers, had answered the call. Mr. Johnson said that after checking with Mr. Reap (T - PH) he had made information fomr the passport file available to the AP and UP at about 5:00 PM in the company of Mr. Reap. In answer to further questioning by Mr. Schwartz, Mr. Johnson said that he has given out information only from the passport application; that none of the reporters had examined the file, although it was on his desk while they were talking with him; and that he had not considered calling or referring to Mr. Schwartz' office when the calls came from the reporters.

Andreas F. Lowenfeld

Concurrences:
SCA - Abba F. Schwartz

11/29/63

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Retyped 6/26/71 by PLH. The original is 2½ pages. CD 427.
cc: HW, JNS

The retyping has not been checked against the original for accuracy at this time.

Commission No. 427

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Mr. Johnson explained that the normal procedure when a passport is applied for at a field post is for a telex to be sent to Washington giving just the name and date of birth of the applicant. The name and date of birth are then checked against IBM card index file. If the name shows up in the card file, the card is run through the IBM coder and appropriate action is taken to determine whether a passport should be issued. If the card index file does not show an entry for the name, a telex is sent back to the field office with instructions to issue the passport.

At

letter of 8-11-65
per NARS

At approximately 12:15 Mr. Johnson opened the safe in his office containing the combinations to the other safes and storage areas in the passport office. He got the safe combination for the room in which the card index is kept. He explained that this room was protected by a combination lock connected to an alarm system and he therefore went into an empty room across the hall from Room 1811 to call the guards and advise them to disconnect the alarm. At approximately 12:25 Mr. Johnson opened the door to the room containing the card index file and showed the system to Messrs. Chayes, Schwartz, Ehrlich and Lowenfeld. Mr. Johnson first picked up some telexes to show how they are received from the domestic passport agencies. Mr. Johnson explained that these telexes are normally kept for three months. Therefore, he said, there would be no record in the Department of the telex concerning Oswald. Mr. Johnson said he assumed that the telex in the New Orleans office would also have been destroyed after ninety days.

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Mr. Johnson explained that a lookout notice on the grounds of possible membership in the communist party would be posted only on the basis of notification from the FBI, and that there had been no such notification in the Oswald case. Mr. Schwartz also asked Mr. Johnson about the status of the repatriation loan and its effect on the issuance of a passport to Oswald. Mr. Johnson stated that lookout cards on the basis of unpaid loans to the Department were posted only upon notification by the Department's Finance Office, and that no such notice had been received.

Mr. Johnson was then asked by Mr. Schwartz who had had access to the Oswald file on November 22 before it was sent up to Mr. Schwartz' office at Mr. Mace's request. Mr. Johnson said that the FBI had been the first to look at the file shortly after the assassination. Later, Mr. Gulick of Associated Press and also someone from United Press had called him. Mr. Johnson said that

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he had thereupon called Mr. Manning's office and that Mr. Joe Reap, one of the Department's press officers, had answered the call. Mr. Johnson said that after checking with Mr. Reap he had made information from the passport file available to the AP and UP at about 5:00 PM in the company of Mr. Reap. In answer to further questioning by Mr. Schwartz, Mr. Johnson said that he had given out information only from the passport applications; that none of the reporters had examined the file although it was on his desk while they were talking with him and that he had not considered calling or referring to Mr. Schwartz's office when the calls came from the reporters.

Andreas F. Lowenfeld

Concurrences:

SA - Abba P. Schwartz

DECLASSIFIED
Dept. of State
letter of 8-11-82
per NCAS

11/29/63

Commission No. 427

#427

MEMORANDUM FOR THE FILES

Subject: Issuance of Passport to Lee H. Oswald

At the direction of the Acting Secretary, a review of Departmental files concerning Lee H. Oswald was made in the Office of the Legal Adviser on Friday, November 22 and continued to the next morning. Among the files examined was the file kept by the Passport Office.

The Passport file contained the original of a passport application executed by Oswald in New Orleans on June 24, [illegible]. The application showed that the passport had been issued the following day, June 25, 1963. Since it appeared likely that questions would be raised concerning the rapidity with which Oswald had been issued his passport despite the considerable [illegible] on him, Mr. Abbe Lowell, Minority Counsel of SCA, telephoned Mr. Robert Johnson, Chief [illegible] of the Passport Office at approximately 11:30 AM on November 22 and asked him to come to the Department and to explain the Department's procedures in issuing passports.

Mr. Johnson arrived in his office at approximately [illegible] on November 23. Mr. Schlam, Mr. Ehrlich and Mr. Lowenfels met Mr. Johnson at his office. Mr. Chayes was summoned by telephone as soon as Mr. Johnson arrived.

Mr. Johnson explained that the normal procedure when a passport is applied for at a field post is for a telex to be sent to Washington giving just the name and date of birth of the applicant. The name and date of birth are then checked against the IBM card index file. If the name shows up in the card file, a card is run through the IBM order and appropriate action is taken to determine whether a passport should be issued. If the card index file does not show an entry for the name, a telex is sent back to the field office with instructions to issue the passport.

At

DECLASSIFIED
Dept. of State
letter of 8-17-65
per NARS

At approximately 12:15 Mr. Johnson opened the safe in his office containing the combinations to the other safes and areas in the passport office. He got the safe combination for the room in which the card index is kept. He explained that the room was protected by a combination lock connected to an alarm system and he therefore went into an adjoining room across the hall from Room 1811 to call the guards and advise them to disarm the alarm. At approximately 12:15 Mr. Johnson opened the door to the room containing the card index file and showed the cards to Messrs. Chapin, Schwartz, Ehrlich and Lowenfeld. Mr. Johnson first picked up some telexes to show how they are received from the domestic passport agencies. Mr. Johnson explained that the telexes are normally kept for three months. Therefore, he said there would be no record in the Department of the telex concerning Oswald. Mr. Johnson said he thought that the telex in the New Orleans office would also have been destroyed after ninety days.

Mr. Johnson then demonstrated the card index file. It appeared that there was no card for Oswald. Mr. Johnson explained that the reason for this was that the lookout notice which would have been posted pursuant to Mike Wright's instructions on March 25, 1959 had been withdrawn, and that subsequent to that time no ground existed for denial of a passport to Oswald.

Mr. Johnson explained that a lookout notice on the grounds of possible membership in the communist party would be posted only on the basis of notification from the FBI, and that there had been no such notification in the Oswald case. Mr. Schwartz also asked Mr. Johnson about the status of the repatriation loan and its effect on the issuance of a passport to Oswald. Mr. Johnson stated that lookout cards on the basis of outstanding loans to the Department were posted only upon notification from the Department's Finance Office, and that no such notice had been received.

Mr. Johnson was then asked by Mr. Schwartz who had had access to the Oswald file on November 22 before it was sent up to Mr. Schwartz' office at Mr. Mace's request. Mr. Johnson said that Mr. Mace had been the first to look at the file shortly after the assassination. Later, Mr. Calich of Associated Press and also someone from United Press had called him. Mr. Johnson said that

he had

he had [illegible] called Mr. [illegible] office and that Mr. Joe Reap, one of [illegible] associates, had answered the call. Mr. [illegible] made this [illegible] checking with Mr. Reap he had made [illegible] notes from the passport file available to the AP and UP [illegible] the company of Mr. Reap. In answer to further questions by Mr. Schwartz, Mr. Johnson said that he had given them information only from the passport applications; that none of the [illegible] had examined the file, although it was available [illegible] they were talking with him; and that he had not consulted [illegible] or referring to Mr. Schwartz' office when the calls came from the reporters.

Thomas F. Longnfeld

Concurred in:

SCA - Abba P. Schwartz

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Dept. of State
letter of 8-17-65
per NCAS - 118

11/29/63